

BENCHMARKS

JULY 2006

THE TEENAGER IN US

Contributed by Jennifer Dyer Wells
Trial Court Administrator

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FACTS ON THE
FOURTEENTH
CIRCUIT

- One of the largest geographic circuits in the state of Florida.
- Circuit stretches from the Emerald Coast of the Gulf of Mexico to the Alabama and Georgia state lines.
- 14th Circuit has county seats in the Central time zone as well as the Eastern time zone.

If our circuit was human, I think it would resemble a gangly teenager—all legs and arms, big-footed, voice changing in mid sentence—basically, a funny-looking kid with all the right parts and so much talent.

The Fourteenth Judicial Circuit is growing up. No longer the very small circuit, we have received in the last year a county judge for Bay County and will soon have the second circuit judge to join our bench. With that, the complement of staff with the transition to state funding and our growing area, our progress has been phenomenal. Prior to 2004, staff, including county employees numbered 25. Since 2004, our circuit support staff has doubled, and we will receive an additional 2 law clerks and an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Director and a Program Assistant to support the ADR program circuit-wide effective this July 2006.

We have the necessary staff to do the job to help support our judges and the citizens of our circuit. The potential is there. However, working in the court

setting is a unique field and requires a honing of skills. Not many university programs are available which specialize in judicial administration; therefore, many of our professionals have crossed over to the courts from other, yet similar, fields of expertise. As we grow into the “shoes” of the court, we will be able to bring the expertise of these varied fields and develop a staff which has a strong and versatile background of resources and knowledge.

Along with the growth of our staff, we often have to squeeze staff into spaces not yet ready to handle the growth. Our counties have a difficult time responding to our space needs. I have been amazed at the flexibility and adaptability of our staff who have been put in tiny closets, lobby offices, nooks and crannies acting as office space. While renovations are soon on the way (yes, Bay County’s renovation will begin this fall!), it is often too late. The renovations begin after more staff have been allocated and we continue to play the “we still need space” game. Again,

everyone pitches in and does their part to be wonderful professionals and make the best out of our growing pains.

The most exciting part of growth is the chance for staff to experience opportunities to move into new jobs. Internal promotions are now a possibility. When it is appropriate, the Court wants to promote from within; the chance to promote our hard-working staff is always a goal. With additional staff positions, it is now a possibility.

I have always liked teenagers. They are bright, youthful, full of excitement and new ideas. I like where we are in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit. I hope we can always keep a youthful outlook on our profession and tackle our challenges like a wide-eyed teenager—with enthusiasm and the potential and hope for tomorrow.



SPOTLIGHT ON THE CIRCUIT

PILOT PROGRAM BEGINS IN BAY COUNTY

In many instances it is impossible for the Court and those tasked with monitoring juvenile offenders to know where a youth is every minute of every day, but for some high risk juvenile offenders, this is no longer the case. July 2006 marked the beginning of a pilot program in Bay County that uses a small lightweight Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking device to give real-time updates as to the comings and goings of the person wearing the device.

While GPS tracking is not entirely new to the courts, the system being utilized on juvenile offenders is state of the art. *Trackerpal*, a company based out of Salt Lake City, Utah, has

developed a system using the industry's first small one piece unit (worn on the ankle) that requires no special tools, is tamper resistant, and works in places normal GPS does not.

Circuit Judge James B. Fensom first learned of this technology at a meeting of the judges in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit. A local representative of the company gave a presentation, sparking the interest of Judge Fensom, who hears juvenile matters in Bay County. Upon further investigation, Judge Fensom found that the program not only offered real time tracking, violation detection upon entering a restricted area, and notification of the juvenile probation officer assigned, it is also much more cost effective versus committing the offender to a residential juvenile program. The cost per day of the *Trackerpal* system is around \$10, in comparison to residential treatment which ranges anywhere from \$100 to \$200 a day depending upon the program. Currently, the pilot program instituted in Bay County has 10 monitoring systems, which are being placed on the more serious juvenile offenders in addition to other traditional means of supervision. Each monitor can be programmed to meet the specific criteria of the offender. For example, exclusion zones can be set, so that if the individual wearing the unit enters the zone, an alert is triggered. The units also have the ability to notify a victim when the offender comes within a

specified distance from the victim's residence.

A daily report is generated for the Juvenile Probation Officer of activity, and the JPO has the ability to access the system at any time to monitor movement.

Based on the results of this pilot program, Judge Fensom is looking to extend these devices to other areas in which he presides, including domestic violence cases. After evaluation of the program, this may well become a new standard in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit.

" I feel this is a great program and, in some instances can be ordered in the place of a more costly residential program."

Circuit Judge
James B. Fensom

FROM THE PERSONNEL DESK



Contributed by Larry Lyons

Administrative Services

Manager

Occasionally, we find ourselves unable to satisfy requests for information pertaining to your individual salary, taxes, and W-2 Form information. This is usually due to us not having access to your financial data.

However, I would like to remind you that each employee can directly access their salary information 24/7 using the Florida Accounting Information Resource (FLAIR) website. FLAIR provides access to view current earning statements, past statements, W-4 Form

information, in addition to any employee reimbursement transaction such as travel.

We have placed a link on the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit's website that will connect you with FLAIR, just click on Human Resources then click FLAIR. Also, you can access directly from the Internet using

<http://flair.dbf.state.fl.us/>.

If you are new to FLAIR, you will be required to register on the site at the "New Employees' Information Center" to gain access.



TECH TALK

CONTRIBUTED BY GARY HAGAN, TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

The Fourteenth Judicial Circuit has recently purchased an Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft. This agreement will provide our organization and employees with many benefits.

These benefits include volume discounts on Microsoft products, IT standardization, fixed annual price per desktop, and software assurance benefits.

Two exciting features of this

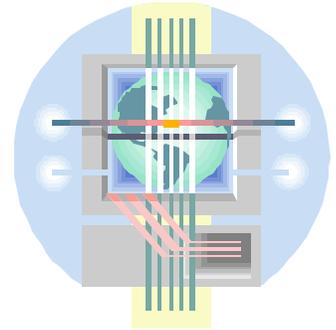
program include the Microsoft Employee Purchase Program and the Microsoft Home Use Program.

Under the Employee Purchase Program Court employees are now eligible to purchase some of Microsoft's most popular consumer products at discounted prices.

The Home Use Program enables Court employees to get a licensed copy of most Microsoft Office desktop

applications and install and use them on their home computer. For each product the employee can order and install a single copy on their home computer as long as they are a licensed user and covered by software assurance. The employee can continue to use the software as long as they are employed by the Courts.

Watch for upcoming emails on these programs.



For more information on this article or technology related issues, contact Gary Hagan at 850-747-5410.

DRUG COURT GRADUATE HONORED BY GOVERNOR

Three years ago, no one, including James Richard "Ricky" Moore, would have ever imagined that he would be standing next to the Governor of Florida, being honored as an outstanding citizen.

In February of 2003, addicted to drugs and in jail on a felony charge, Mr. Moore was given the opportunity to enter the Drug Court Program located in Jackson County. Since hitting bottom that day, Mr. Moore has done nothing but rise above adversity; therefore, it was a clear choice to nominate him to be recognized as an Outstanding Drug Court Graduate at the Governor's Drug Control Summit, held June 7, 2006 in Tallahassee, Florida.

The Summit, which was by invitation only, was attended

by dignitaries and experts in the field of addiction. Among those attending were Governor Jeb Bush and his wife, Columba, Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings, Florida's Drug Czar Bill Janes, Secretary of the Department of Corrections William McDonough, Judge Melanie May, Judge Terry Terrell, and the 14th Judicial Circuit's Chief Judge William L. Wright, to name a few. The event was preceded the prior evening with a dinner at the Governor's Mansion, in which all the Drug Court honorees were in attendance.

On the day of the event, each of the 13 outstanding graduates were publicly recognized. Mr. Moore's highlighted accomplishments included the fact that he owns his own painting company, where he employs two other individuals; he is

very active in the local Narcotic's Anonymous meetings; he volunteers to share his life story to youth and adults alike; and he is currently working on a short film about his journey for the local public access television channel.

He and the other honorees were given a plaque and had their photograph taken with Governor Bush.

"When you hear the stories of these graduates, you see how effective drug courts really are."

*Bill Janes
Director, Florida
Office of Drug
Control*



14th Judicial Circuit Outstanding Drug Court Graduate nominee, James "Ricky" Moore (center) with Governor Jeb Bush and other dignitaries at the Governor's Drug Control Summit held on June 7, 2006.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE COURT SYSTEM



ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION/MEDIATION

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is an efficient and cost effective option to adversarial litigation. Mediation, as it is also known, optimizes litigant participation in the resolution of disputes, resulting in more effective use of judicial resources.

ADR has been utilized by the courts of Florida for over 25 years, with the first such program originating in Dade County in 1975. Since the inception of the first mediation program, Florida's system has grown into one of the most comprehensive

court-connected programs in the country.

The principle of this concept is the involvement of litigants in the resolution of their own legal disputes. This not only facilitates a greater interest in the resolution of the matter through the active participation of the litigants, it also helps to reduce the burden on the courts.

Not only does mediation aid in the disposition of numerous cases, it does it in a cost effective manner. A case that is resolved through ADR requires only a fraction of the cost that same case would have incurred if it had taken the traditional route of attorneys and multiple hearings.

Locally within the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit, ADR is an important step in the processing of many cases, but an organized system within the circuit is still a

fledgling concept. At this time, Bay County has a County Court Mediation Program. This program, since its creation, has evolved from dealing only with small claims issues to now also addressing landlord tenant cases, county court civil cases and small claims, attorney pretrial mediation. The program, staffed by Diane Crawford and Sue Ann Murray, works with 23 volunteer mediators and has an initial settlement rate of 85%. Because of the proven success of this program and the ever-expanding demand of the Court's time for such matters, other counties in the Fourteenth Circuit are in the planning stages for a similar system.

Another exciting development for our circuit is the allocation by the Florida Legislature for two new positions in the area of Alternative Dispute Resolution. As mentioned by

Jennifer Wells in her article on Page 1, the circuit is set to add an Alternative Dispute Resolution Director and a Program Assistant to our staff to facilitate and support a circuit-wide ADR program. The addition of this program will only further the benefits mediation can offer the Fourteenth Circuit.

**Excerpts taken from the Florida State Courts website, for more information see www.flcourts.org.*

Currently there are over 5000 certified mediators in the State of Florida, handling county court and circuit court (including family and dependency) issues.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE COURT?

In each edition of *Bookmarks* there is a key element of the Court featured. You may have asked, "What are these key elements, and from where did they come?" Maybe this will help to explain the elements and why they have been identified as such.

Key elements of the Court were identified by the Florida Legislature in 2004, when the state was transitioning the funding structure of the Courts. These changes were required due to revision 7 of Article V of the Florida Constitution. These elements identified by the legislature are most critical to the

successful operation of the court system and, therefore, fall under the State of Florida funding source.

Other features, not specifically identified as key elements, are the fiscal responsibility of the county in which the program or entity serves.

For more information on Court System Funding, please see Chapter 29 of the Florida Statutes.



Birthdays



July

- 1 Brenda Johnson
- 3 Susan Diltz
- 4 Judy Reese
- 16 Diane Pate
- 18 Cheryl Hammond
- 21 Joel Booth

August

- 2 Terri Wengert
- 4 Don T. Sirmons
- 6 David C. Johnson
- 10 Frances Hall
- 11 Colby Peel
- 14 Sue Stanley
- 16 Peggy Black
- 18 Denise Hendrix
- 19 Debbie Burch
- 20 Thomas F. Welch
- 24 Jane Sherrill
- 27 Patricia Moore

September

- 1 Kevin Grover
- 11 Hentz McClellan
- 24 Kimberly Gibson
- 29 Beverly McAllister
- 30 Angie Johnston

Holidays for the Quarter

Independence Day

Tuesday, July 04, 2006



Labor Day

Monday, September 04, 2006

CHIEF JUDGE: HONORABLE WILLIAM L. WRIGHT

COURT ADMINISTRATOR: JENNIFER DYER WELLS

Editor: Amber Baggett, Senior Court Program Specialist

Benchmarks is a quarterly newsletter published by and for the 14th Judicial Circuit and is intended to be a source of information regarding the courts. Rights are reserved to edit for clarity or brevity, or reject any material submitted due to space or other reasons.

FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
COURT ADMINISTRATION

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Check out our website

<http://www.jud14.flcourts.org/>